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|  | **Title**: | POSTMORTEM EXAMINATION | | **Policy #** | | MO.1.03 |
| **Division:** | Forensic, Pathology | | **Page:** | | Page 1 of 3 |
| **Coroner Signature:** | |  | **NAME Reference:** | | B4j,C6a,C6k,C6l,E2k,F4f, F6b,F6c,F6d,F6e,F6g,F6h,F6i | |
| **Approved/Revised Date:** | | **02-20-2024** | **IACME Reference:** | | A6h,B4a,B4j,C5a,C5g, C5i,C5k,C5l,C5m,D2d | |



**POLICY**:

The Ada County Coroner’s Office (ACCO) provides the services, equipment, and facilities necessary to perform forensic postmortem examinations and ensure accepted procedures are in accordance with statutory regulations, the mission of the ACCO, College of American Pathologists (CAP) standards, and Forensic Autopsy Performance Standards.

**PROCEDURE**:

At all times, care will be exercised to ensure privacy and integrity for the decedent is maintained.

1. **General**
   1. Proper personal protective equipment (PPE) donning and doffing, and universal precautions shall be taken for every postmortem examination by all individuals present at the time of the exam.
   2. Participants and observers present at the time of the postmortem examination shall be documented.
   3. Decedent identification shall be confirmed prior to examination.
      1. If identification is unknown, procedures will follow ACCO Policy: *Identification*.
   4. Personal effects intake, documentation, and release shall follow ACCO Policy: *Personal Effects*.
   5. Illicit substances discovered at the time of the postmortem examination shall be notated in the ACCO case management system and released to the appropriate law enforcement agency complying with standard operating procedures.
   6. The decedent shall be enclosed in a sealed body bag, labeled, and secured in a refrigerated cooler following examination.
2. **Level of Exam**
   1. The forensic pathologist will determine the level of postmortem examination as stated in ACCO Policy: *Postmortem Examination Level*.
   2. The daily morning staff meeting shall assist the forensic pathologist in determining the level of examination to be conducted.
3. **Fingerprints**
   1. Fingerprints shall be taken and uploaded to the ACCO case management system.
   2. When ridge detail is visible yet unable to be scanned, macro photography shall be utilized.
   3. In the event neither fingerprints nor macro photography are obtainable, a notation shall be made in the ACCO case management system.
4. **Photography**
   1. Photographs shall be taken of all decedents brought into the ACCO, to include decedents of non-jurisdictional release (NJR) brought in for storage.
   2. The number and type of photographs shall follow best practice and standard operating procedures for postmortem examination level.
   3. Photographs shall be taken prior to the postmortem examination and/or the processing of trace evidence, foreign material, blood patterns, etc.
   4. Orientation photographs shall be taken when close-up photographs are taken.
   5. Each photograph shall include an identification marker containing the decedent’s unique case management system number.
   6. A scale shall be included in photographs documenting wound size, injury, and pertinent findings, as necessary.
   7. Photographs will be backed up on an external hard drive and uploaded to the ACCO case management system.
   8. Photographs taken by attending agencies during the postmortem examination shall not be permitted, without authorization from the forensic pathologist.
      1. When requested, a certified copy of photographic documentation shall be made available to the investigating law enforcement agency.
5. **Chain of Custody**
   1. Forensic Division staff shall identify, secure, preserve, and document:
      1. Evidence, using proper containers and labels
      2. Specimens, using proper containers and labels
   2. Release shall be in accordance with standard operating procedure.
6. **Specimens** 
   1. Specimen collection, storage, and destruction shall be in accordance with ACCO Policy: *Specimen Collection, Storage and Disposal.*
7. **Ancillary Testing**
   1. The Forensic Division shall periodically conduct and document ancillary testing reviews with the Pathology Division regarding scope of panels, type and scope of testing, and postmortem examination suitability, in accordance with standard operating procedure.
   2. The forensic pathologist shall determine the level and type of ancillary testing to be ordered and the specimen to be utilized/tested, if any, for each postmortem examination.
   3. The Forensic Division will prepare, notate in the ACCO case management system, and ship designated specimens for testing following the forensic laboratory guidelines, and in accordance with ACCO standard operating procedure.
8. **Evidence**
9. Evidence collection, storage, and destruction shall be in accordance with ACCO Policy: *Evidence Collection and Storage.*
10. **Radiology**
    1. Radiographs shall be taken on those cases outlined in CAP standards, Forensic Autopsy Performance Standards, ACCO standard operating procedure, and as requested by the forensic pathologist.
    2. Radiographs taken for identification purposes shall be in accordance with ACCO Policy: *Identification*.
    3. Each radiograph shall include an identification marker indicating anatomical position.
    4. Radiographs shall be obtained, uploaded to the ACCO case management system, and retained on an external hard drive.
    5. Procedures shall be monitored by the Forensic Supervisor, and Radiation Safety Officer.
       1. Reference ACCO Policy: *Employee Safety.*
    6. Diagnostic quality shall be reviewed by the forensic pathologist.